



## Promoting KidsWalk-to-School Day: A Program to Promote Physical Activity and Pedestrian Safety

### Public Health Problem

In the United States, only about 1 of every 10 trips to school is made by walking or bicycling. Of school trips 1 mile or less, only 31% are made by walking, and within 2 miles of school, just 2% are made by bicycling. Research suggests that the decline in walking and bicycling may be contributing to the number of overweight children, and in Washington, the number of overweight children has doubled between 1980 and 1999.

### Evidence That Prevention Works

Immediate health benefits of regular physical activity for children include building and maintaining healthy bones, muscles, and joints; controlling weight and reducing fat; fostering healthy social and emotional development; and improving academic performance.

### Program Example

To increase opportunities for children to engage in physical activity, Washington State has promoted KidsWalk-to-School Day and the creation of safe walking routes for children to raise awareness about the importance of walking to school. The Washington Coalition for the Promotion of Physical Activity (WCPPA) and the Oregon Coalition for the Promotion of Physical Activity (OCPA) collaborated to develop a KidsWalk-to-School Day packet of materials that included the Walkability Checklist, the Neighborhood Walking Safety Guide, CDC's KidsWalk-to-School Guide, a list of related educational Web sites, and a Safe and Active Routes to School presentation on CD-ROM. This packet was distributed to community leaders who are interested in promoting walk-to-school efforts. One of the best examples of community involvement in KidsWalk-to-School Day in Washington is in Kitsap County. The Kitsap County Health District solicited help from a broad array of partners including the American Red Cross, Washington State Traffic Safety Commission, Kitsap County Commission for Children and Youth, Parent Teacher Association (PTA), Kitsap Safe Kids Coalition, Kitsap Community Federal Credit Union, Naval Hospital Bremerton, and representatives from local school districts. About 3,500 children at seven schools and many parents participated in KidsWalk-to-School Day.

### Implications

The KidsWalk-to-School program encourages physical activity as an integral part of a child's daily routine. This program demonstrates the importance of promoting walking and bicycling to school to help increase the likelihood that children will engage in physical activity and carry this habit into adulthood. In addition, KidsWalk-to-School promotes the development of safe walking and bicycling routes and safe pedestrian practices to potentially reduce injury among children.

### Contact Information

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